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DE TOCQUEVILLE. *

THERE are as many gradations in the qualities of biographies as there are in human character itself. To make the individual reflect the features of his race and of the times in which he lives, to show to what extent he is behind or before his age, and to give a thorough analysis of his mental faculties and the moral results of their workings, would require a biographer of a higher grade than is usually met with. The biographies however, of men of action, of great muscular enterprise and daring are easily written, and that too by men of moderate abilities, because the dramatic nature of their movements, and their interminable assaults upon men and their doings supply material easily put in order and worked up into a story of interest and novelty to the majority of readers. The empty bubbles which play and break upon the surface of life have an irresistible attraction for men generally as they appeal to their senses and never cause too great a strain upon the machinery of their intellect. The warrior, the politician, the leviathan trafficker, the pirate even, coil up a romance in their petty doings which oftentimes holds in breathless interest the young and the old, the virtuous and the vicious, and kindles a general blaze of notoriety about their names.

But to write an artistic biography of a solitary thinker, and to do him justice in view of his antecedents and the environments of his life, is a work to which few should ever aspire, and still fewer ever hope to accomplish. The biography of every thinker should be relative to those who preceded him in his own line of thought, and be held in due subjection to the psychology of the race to which he belongs and to the social condition of the age in which he lives. To say that a man originates from a certain couple, connected of course with cognate branches, and studied in certain institutions and under certain masters, that he travelled within certain geographical lines, and held certain offices either of honor or emolument, that he belonged to certain social classes and played a prominent part amongst all, may be considered a statement of physiological and material facts, but can be considered no real part of the biography of a great thinker. Every great man originates from the whole past, not from arbitrary fractions of it, and draws his whole intellectual wealth from the accumulated stores of bygone ages. A man who is morally conscious of all he owes to his inheritance will never offend by his immodesty or empty pretences, but will regard himself only as a necessary link between two inseparable parts.

Most of biographers are common-place panegyrists, and see nothing but what is extraordinary in the heroes of whom they write. Every act and saying are repeated as being more precious than rubies, and as having the seal of immortality. They render them so faultless or so great as to detach them from the human category and thereby rub out all ties of connection between the individual and the race. Other biographers, with a more sinister purpose, and blacker motives, write the lives of men to misrepresent both their motives and actions, and to hold them up in a distorted form to the scorn and condemnation of the world. In this way what a vile outlet have we for all national and religious antipathies, all party discord, all sectarian malice, all political revilings, all patriotic gasconadings. This vicious class of biography sustains itself by constantly ferreting out all the points of differences, all the points of discord, and overlooking all points of agreement and all points of concord between individuals and masses of men. It has been marvellously successful in begetting and conserving prejudices, in retarding the growth of man to a state of brotherhood and unity. A great advance in intelligence and moral virility will be necessary to check this overflowing stream of evil in man's nature.

The sketch of the life of Alexis de Tocqueville by Gustave de Beaumont is a warm, well written tribute of friendship rather than a biography properly so called. There is a serenity and completeness in the career of De Tocqueville which gives an easy flow to the pen of his friend. De Beaumont is in no way pretentious in his labor, but feels constantly disposed to be eulogistic, which is pardonable if not praiseworthy in view of the cordial tie of friendship which bound them together for so many years.

On the evening of the sixteenth of April, 1859, Alexis de Tocqueville, at the age of fifty-four years, passed from this temporary sojourn without leaving behind him any children. His life would seem to have been made morally happy by an active, well-organized brain, and the possession of a wife most admirably adapted to his own nature and peculiarities. Born to affluence and into an aristocratic social atmosphere, he could have had no disturbing depressing apprehensions as to the material wants of life, nor could the esthetical part of his nature be violated or outraged by low and vulgar associations.

* Œuvres et Correspondance inédites d'Alexis de Tocqueville, publiées et précédées d'une notice par Gustave de Beaumont. Paris, 1861.

Good manners and good sentiments were infused into him at home, without cramming him with untimely instruction. To this is due the happy natural flight of his mental forces in the after stages of his life;—a mode of training which might be profitably imitated by our own American families. If he did not early excel in Latin and Greek he showed his originality of nature by successful essays in his own mother tongue. At about twenty-one he travelled in Italy and made an excursion into the island of Sicily. Turning this to the advantage of his mental growth, he observed closely, saw all he could, and committed to writing the impressions made on his mind by the many monuments of departed genius in Italy. His youthful imagination took wings, and he saw in a dream old Rome before him clothed in its pristine grandeur, its heroes, its glory, its power and especially its liberty. He thus saw passing before him all the great events, all the great men of Roman antiquity from the foundation of the Republic to the death of Cæsar; from the first Brutus to the advent of Augustus. It is thus that travelling, taking us away from the commonplace things of our own family cradle, makes us sensible of what humanity has done in the past and what it is called upon to do in the future. The bad government of Sicily led De Tocqueville to inquire into the bearing of governments generally upon the misery or prosperity of nations. At first glancing at the outward condition of Sicily, he soon surveys her institutions and manners and then ascends to the higher region of ideas. To think was the essence of De Tocqueville's mind, and it was said that his head was ever active and took no repose. Essentially practical in all his speculations, he never occupied himself with the past only in view of the present, with foreign nations only with a view of benefiting his own country.

Six months after the revolution of July, 1830, a revolution which appeared to him a misfortune and to which he gave his adhesion with sadness, he set out on his journey to the United States.

In 1831 De Tocqueville arrived here. The country was then as to manners and institutions in the most favorable condition to be seen by a foreigner. Prosperity was gilding everything in the nation, and all our people sat smiling upon the highest wave of success. What a change a few years later!

De Tocqueville, like most men of genius, had a much more retentive memory for ideas than for words or figures. This of itself would early indicate the natural bent of his studies. In taking a survey of this country he commenced with the New England States, considering them the source of the national stream. This we suppose he did merely on the ground that at that time the English blood prevailed here numerically. He found general good sense to be characteristic of our people, and that our prosperity is mainly due to our great extent of fruitful territory. The scenery, the wild wastes, the deserts, the all but impenetrable solitudes of America seem to have deeply impressed his tender and melancholy soul. He evidently found it occasionally painful to descend from the poetical contemplation of nature to the analytical study of men and their political doings. Rich in mind and fresh in heart must an author be to discover the radical deficiencies and derangements of things around him, and to point out a better pathway to a higher order of things.

One year spent in this country, De Tocqueville returned to France to indulge on the one side all that is sacred of the heart's affections, and on the other to exercise the faculties of his mind in the great work of his life, namely, "Democracy in America." Throwing aside the irksome duties of a magistrate, fit only for an inferior nature, he yielded cheerfully to all the fascinations of his head and heart. As yet unknown, unrenowned, he made his obscurity the feast of his soul, perfectly unconscious that the child of his brain was going ere long to waft his name throughout the world. In the month of January, 1835, the two first volumes of his great work appeared. Received everywhere with the warmest approbation, appealing to the interests of all classes, and working up material fresh and novel to all readers, it not only met the wants of European curiosity, but made us here acquainted with the nature and character of our own institutions. The superiority of the book was so great that serious doubts existed in the minds of all as to whether the author was an aristocrat or a democrat, nobody dreaming at the time that if he had been conventionally either he never could have written a work of its class or so good. It is the prerogative of genius that it always partakes of the essence of the past, present and future without ever being mechanically or materially bound to either.

The marriage of De Tocqueville shows his independence, his moral force of will, and his little sympathy with democracy as an element of good in the organization of the family or society. It is in the moral order of things as democratic to idolize wealth, to sacrifice everything to it, as it is aristocratic to resist its temptations, to forego its seductions, and to bear up against its demoralizing inroads. The biblical injunction

that we cannot serve God and Mammon has a ring of divinity in it which can never be understood and practised but by the highest natures. Our author, varying from the social rule of his class and in the frowning teeth of democracy, married a lady because he loved her, and not because she had wealth and position to lift him up into the rank of the wealthy classes, and to extend the sphere of his material power. How unlike our commercial democratic heroes who regard themselves as ruined if their children fail to find an Eldorado in their marriages.

As his biographer says, De Tocqueville knew and saw no possible happiness for him only in the choice of a woman who could blend her life with his, yield herself unreservedly to his mode of living, to his tastes, to his labors, to his passions, so foreign to the tastes and passions of the world. What he sought he found, and enjoyed twenty-five years of real conjugal happiness with her. Pardon us, dear reader, if we say that such prizes are not very often drawn from the lottery of womanhood. Since women have set aside the banner of religious and social duty for that of legal right, our homes are but too often turned into tribunals of wordy wrangling.

The moral symmetry of De Tocqueville's life is the best proof of the Christianity of his thoughts and feelings, but he, in common with all thinking men, was troubled by doubts of the intellect which never disturbed the rectitude of his actions or the purity of his thoughts. According to him religion is the mother of all good works, and out of them grows all true liberty. Every link in the chain of his life seems fresh from the inward soul of goodness which vitalized it. A happy harmony existed between his precepts and practices which will always give to his teachings a powerful influence in the formation of young minds.

On a future occasion we hope to test the great value of his speculations by an examination of his works.

The Princess observed her friend to long eagerly for works of art, but to grow cold and weary in their possession. In such cases a person has really to consider the difference as to whether the subject is worthy of the enthusiasm felt for it; if it be, then must pleasure and admiration always grow upon it, and perpetually renew themselves; if it be not entirely so, then the thermometer sinks some degrees, and one gains in knowledge what one loses in prejudice. Hence is it certainly quite true that a person must *buy* works of art in order to understand them, so that the desire may be removed and the true value of the object established.—*Goethe.*

Foreign Correspondence, Items, etc.

Holland.—A few weeks ago a monument was erected at *Rotterdam*, in honor of Tollens, a popular national poet, from the chisel of the sculptor Strackee. It is said to be fine in sentiment and character, and a noble ornament to the beautiful park in which it is placed.

Rembrandt's famous "Lesson in Anatomy," has been in the hands of the picture cleaners. Few who know the fate of treasures in art, when thus put at peril, will hear of such a circumstance without dreading the result. If we may believe a Belgian authority, the picture has survived the operation, coming out of the picture doctor's hands, fresher and sounder than before it went into them. It has had a new lining, and is again in its place, where it hangs as one of the glories of the country.

Germany.—If there be any one noticeable feature of art encouragement of the present day, it is the growing disposition of artists and amateurs to mingle together informally in clubs and other social gatherings. We have recorded the acts of this kind in our own land, again in France and England, and now we have to do it for Germany. At *Cologne* they have formed what is called an *artistic circle*, wholly free of the restrictions that belong to public societies; there are no forms to respect, or by-laws to break or obey, which experience shows are more apt to mar than to foster the interests which are presumed to be regulated by them. Every artist and friend of art has the right to participate in the meetings of the circle; news of the day relative to the progress of art is discussed; pictures by everybody, living or dead, are shown, that can be shown without trouble; the purchases of amateurs are exhibited and discussed, and the subjects of works in progress are analyzed, and the artist aided with information if he chooses to avail himself of it. There is no idea about art afloat that is not welcomed, unless it involves some formal handling of it not in keeping with the careless, independent spirit of the circle. How far such a free institution is adapted to our soil we know not; we state the fact, and leave it to thinkers on the subject.

France.—A monument in honor of Ary Scheffer is in progress at Paris, to be erected at Dordrecht, the artists' native place. The model is now complete. The statue of the great artist represents him standing in a meditative attitude holding a brush in his right hand, and in the left a palette, with the hand resting on the sketch of a bust of his mother. This work is to be cast in bronze, and is to be of somewhat colossal dimensions. Mezzara is the name of the artist employed on it.

The Museum of the Louvre has just acquired a splendid triptych from the Danielli Gallery at Turin, and from the pencil of one of the early Italian masters (name uncertain), at the price of 13,500 francs. The directors have also purchased a little chalk drawing of a young girl's head, by Leonardo da Vinci, for 4,500 francs.

Paris, *December* —.

The weather has been enough to drive a man to charcoal fumes! I never saw such a horrible, cold, dark, humid cellar sort of atmosphere. If McEntee wants to